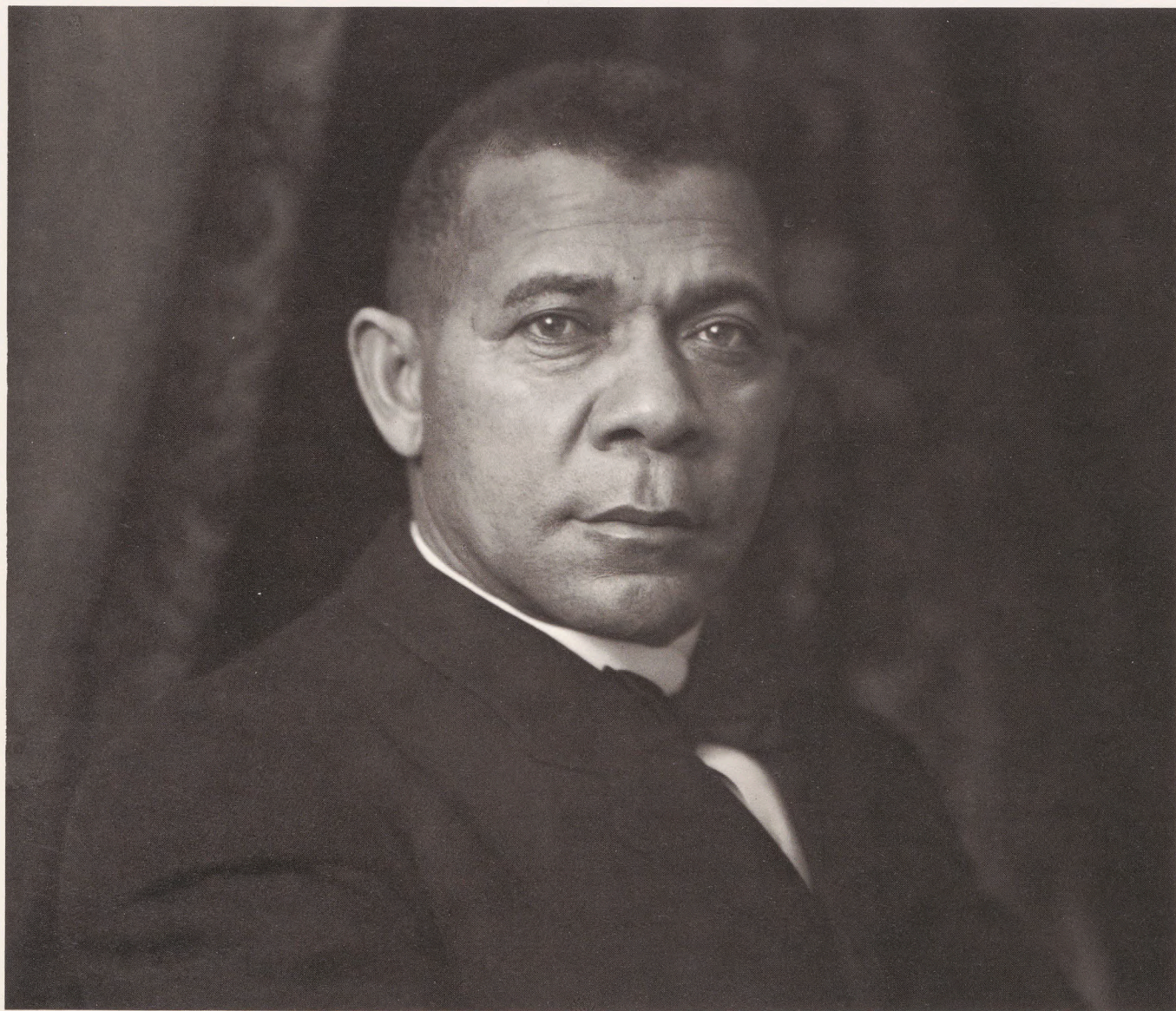


Addison N. Scurlock



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The Historic Photographs of
Addison N. Scurlock

June 19 — August 29, 1976

The Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C.

FOREWORD

The Historic Photographs of Addison N. Scurlock is one in a year-long series of events presented specially in the Bicentennial spirit. Beyond this, it is in keeping with The Corcoran Gallery's ongoing commitment to the Washington Community. We have been assisted in this exhibition by Independence Federal Savings and Loan Association, Washington, D.C., and the Office of Bicentennial Programs, District of Columbia.

Roy Slade, *Director*

The Corcoran Gallery of Art is increasingly involved with photography, both historic and contemporary. This involvement is determined not so much by the policy of any individual or group, but by the undeniable pressure of the work itself. Occasionally a force comes to play on the sensibilities of experts and public alike to create the need for attention to an art form. I can think of no better example of this inexplicable phenomenon than the present one. In the Addison N. Scurlock archive we see not only a master craftsman at work but an extraordinary chronicle of American history in the first half of this century. The intention of the present exhibition is not to offer an exhaustive view of the lifework of this prolific photographer. That important task remains to be undertaken; one hopes this introduction to the work may stimulate the more extensive task.

The Corcoran Gallery is indebted for its introduction to this important fund of work to Harry Lunn, of Lunn Gallery/Graphics International Ltd. Assistant Curator Francis Fralin has co-organized the exhibition with me; Dr. Michael Winston, Director of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, contributed the introductory essay and explanatory text accompanying the photographs. Our greatest indebtedness is to the photographer's son, Robert S. Scurlock, himself a photographer and a leading member of the Washington community.

The catalogue is made possible by funding from Independence Federal Savings and Loan Association. I want to express my more than ordinary sense of gratitude to Independence Federal for its courageous and imaginative commitment to this project.

Jane Livingston, *Chief Curator*

INTRODUCTION

Washington and the "Secret City"

For most Americans, Washington has been an elusive city. Hard to characterize, full of contradictions, vulgarities, subtleties and unpredictable energies, it has been for most of the country a remote reality except in times of acute national crisis. If the history and cultural life of Washington have received less attention than one would expect for the capital city of the United States, it is not surprising that the complex development of its black population, historically significant quantitatively as well as qualitatively, has remained substantially unexamined, an enigma by turns quaint, exotic or foreboding. In her comprehensive historical study of Washington, the late Constance McLaughlin Green developed the theme of the "Secret City," a separate social world that exerted a powerful influence on the evolution of the city but paradoxically remained virtually unknown to white residents. This circumstance flowed from the pattern of race relations defined by the bitter struggle over slavery in the city's first seven decades, and segregation for the century following emancipation. To a contemporary observer the concept of a "Secret City" may seem odd, particularly when it is recalled that as early as 1800 more than a fourth of the population in Washington was black. How could the gulf necessary for perpetuation of a separate black world be maintained for nearly two centuries?

The Creation of a Separate World

When George Washington selected a site for the future capital in 1791, blacks were already resi-

dents of the territory to be ceded to the Federal Government by Maryland and Virginia. And although a black man, Benjamin Banneker, was to assist Mayor Pierre Charles L' Enfant in planning the city, the dominant spirit of the capital was that of the slave-holding South. From 1800 to 1850 the city was one of the most active centers of the slave trade, with all the legal apparatus of Black Codes, a curfew and pass system for "free persons of color," and slave markets at the center of the city. Indeed many of the early public buildings of Washington were constructed by slave artisans. After a brief, progressive respite during Reconstruction, the tide of prejudice and proscription rose again. A system of segregated schools, hospitals, and other public institutions was erected which had the support and sanction of all the branches of local and national government as well as public opinion. The details of this situation are too well-documented to require enumeration in this space, but some sense of the spirit of the city may be gained from recalling the fact that in 1922, when the Lincoln Memorial was dedicated, the seating was segregated; three years later, the Ku Klux Klan paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue 25,000 strong to a rally at the Washington Monument. Despite these circumstances, Washington developed as the most significant city for Black Americans. Until the First World War it had the largest Negro population of any city in the United States. Within this "Secret City" there developed the most fully articulated Negro community in the nation. In defiance of circumstances a climate of excellence was made possible that was not duplicated elsewhere.

An especially significant aspect of this development was the growth of the largest group of black intellectuals, cultural organizations and educational institutions in the United States. Despite the serious limitations of segregation, Washington attracted an unusual black population. Its colored public schools were known throughout the nation as highly competitive and the best available to Negroes during the era of segregation. The agencies of the Federal Government, though riddled with discrimination, offered stable employment, a circumstance not repeated elsewhere in the United States. Some intellectual and cultural organizations played a significant role in making Washington a cultural capital for Black Americans. These included the Bethel Literary and Historical Association, founded in 1881; the American Negro Academy, (1897); the Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society, (1901); and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (1915). The most important institution in this regard, of course, was Howard University. Founded in 1867, it was the only comprehensive university open to substantial numbers of Blacks, and its colleges, graduate and professional schools trained nearly half of the nation's black physicians and dentists and more than ninety percent of all the black lawyers. The University attracted to its faculty the largest group of black scholars in the world. The combination of these institutions and special circumstances produced a world unfamiliar to most Americans, including many Blacks. With the beginning of desegregation, the closed social world in which this cultural and intellectual life flourished began to lose its vitality and decline. It is now a part of American social history that remains to be analyzed and understood.

Addison N. Scurlock

An unusual opportunity to look at the world of the "Secret City" is in the collection of portraits by Addison N. Scurlock. That he was one of America's great photographers is obvious to any visitor to this exhibition. What may be most striking to those unfamiliar with the "Secret City" are the qualities of quiet dignity, cultivation and achievement that are captured by Addison Scurlock. His reputation among Black Americans was so well established that black leaders from all regions of the country traveled to his studio for the inimitable portrait by a master craftsman. His studio was also a center for documenting the emergence of the flourishing black community in Washington. Born in Fayetteville, North Carolina in 1883, Addison Scurlock became an apprentice at Rice Studios of Washington in 1900. Eleven years later he opened his own studio at 900 U Street, N.W. Here he developed the techniques that were the basis for the national reputation he acquired in less than a decade. He was assisted first by his wife Mamie Estelle, and later by his two sons George and Robert, who carried on the business after his death in 1964. In the work of Addison Scurlock, the specialist in the evolution of American photography finds rich possibilities for analysis. For those with an aesthetic interest in rendering human character through the medium of photography, there are also real rewards. For all Americans anxious to recapture a sense of a world too little appreciated, or understood, the sensitive and revealing work of Addison Scurlock is a genuine treasure.

Michael R. Winston
Moorland-Spingarn Research Center
Howard University

An Appreciation of Addison N. Scurlock's Photographic Achievements

After spending some forty years in professional photography, a career that began in the back rooms of the Scurlock Studio under the personal tutelage of Addison N. Scurlock, I have acquired an increased appreciation of the total photographic skills of my father. This is reinforced again and again as I view his photographs dating back to the turn of the century.

The casual viewer of this retrospective exhibition will be impressed with the beauty and grace of the photographs. My father consistently portrayed his subjects with great dignity and character. The more sophisticated photographic eye will look at the whole and then examine the details, ultimately considering the basic elements of content, subject direction, composition, lighting and print quality. All of these facets can be covered by one word, technique.

Despite the fact that photographic equipment of the early 1900s lacked the sophisticated gadgetry, high speed super resolution emulsions and the space age darkroom marvels we use today, Addison Scurlock had a thorough understanding of the basic photographic process. He was a consummate artist with both animate and inanimate subjects, indoors or outdoors. Look, for example, at the Chapel at Howard University and the portrait of Booker T. Washington illuminated with flash powder and exposed on a Hammer Glass plate. Then view the photograph of a formal dance in the early twenties, made with an 8 x 10 view camera from a high balcony position, also using a glass plate while the hall was illuminated with flash powder. Close inspection reveals that the detail in this photograph is sharp from foreground to background, suggesting a tilted lens stage. Another example of extremely fine technique is the labora-

tory picture of scientist, Dr. Ernest Just, made on a glass plate using available light. There are many other examples of specialized technique throughout this selection of photographs.

The print quality of the vintage prints exhibited is further enhanced by the use of special formats, oblongs, ovals and circles, some with discreet embossing and photographically produced tinted borders, single and multiple. The tinted border is a lost art, completely unknown in contemporary work. The examples of early printing in this selection reflect the creative strength of the complete photographer from visual conception to the finished product.

As a darkroom technician, Addison Scurlock was again the master of his craft. Until the 1940s all solutions from hypo to toners were prepared from individual chemical agents. Various strength developers were used to accommodate special situations and produce the mellow tones characteristic of his portrait work. A large percentage of portrait printing was done by contact on the old Eastman Athena papers. These straight chloride emulsions lent themselves to a wide variety of tones when manipulated using controlled development procedures. In reprinting those photographs presented here which are not vintage prints, I have attempted to produce images with the same qualities of tone and contrast that my father achieved.

The photographs assembled for this exhibition represent a cross-section of the work done by my father. The selection of individual pictures was carefully made to include most if not all of the types of work he engaged in. I trust the information presented here will give a more complete picture than ever before presented of Addison N. Scurlock, photographic artist, a man who loved his work and whose achievements will live on for many years.

Robert N. Scurlock



Addison N. Scurlock

1883-1964

Born June 19, 1883 Fayetteville, N.C.

Completed High School Fayetteville, 1900, and moved to Washington, D.C. where he entered an apprenticeship in photography at the Rice Studio on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Began his own photographic operations in Washington and other cities about 1904.

Awarded a Gold Medal for Excellence in photography by the Jamestown Exposition, 1907.

Opened the Scurlock Studio 1911, which would be in continuous operation until retirement in 1964.

Acted as official photographer for Howard University from early 1900s to 1964.

Photographs selected and published by the Association for the Study of Negro History for use in schools, 1920.

Work published in many major newspapers, magazines and books throughout his professional career, 1904-1964.

Initiated and operated a newsreel on Black activities for the Lichtman Theater chain in 1930s.

Exhibited in "21 Photographers" exhibition in the Intuitiveye Gallery, 1976.

Work selected for special portfolio, *Black Photographers Annual*, 1976.

Work selected for chapter in *History of Black Photographers* by Anthony Barbosa, New York, 1976.



55. *Dr. Ernest E. Just, Research Scientist*



108. Waterfront



113. Long Walk, Howard University



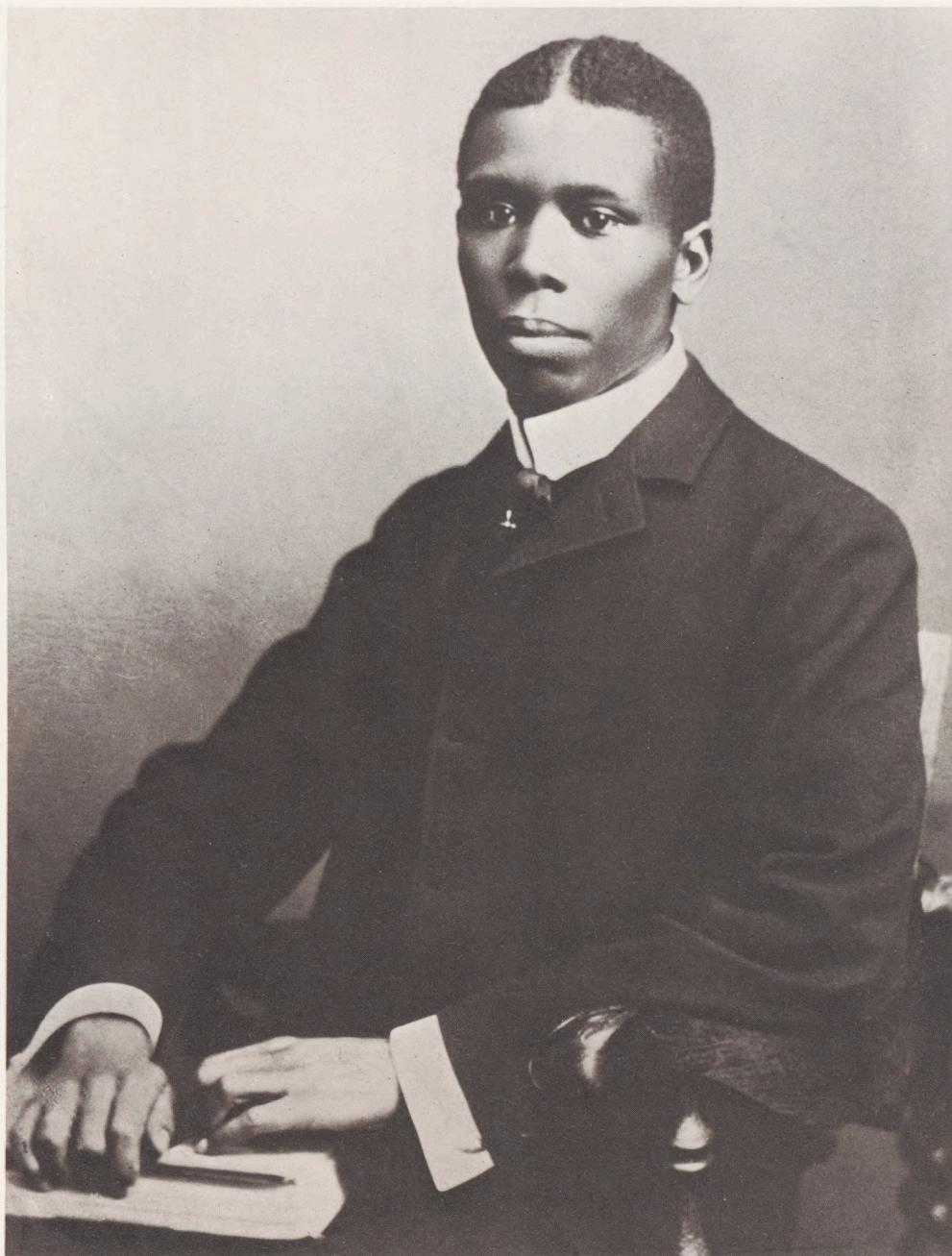
78. Picnic Group, Highland Beach, Md.



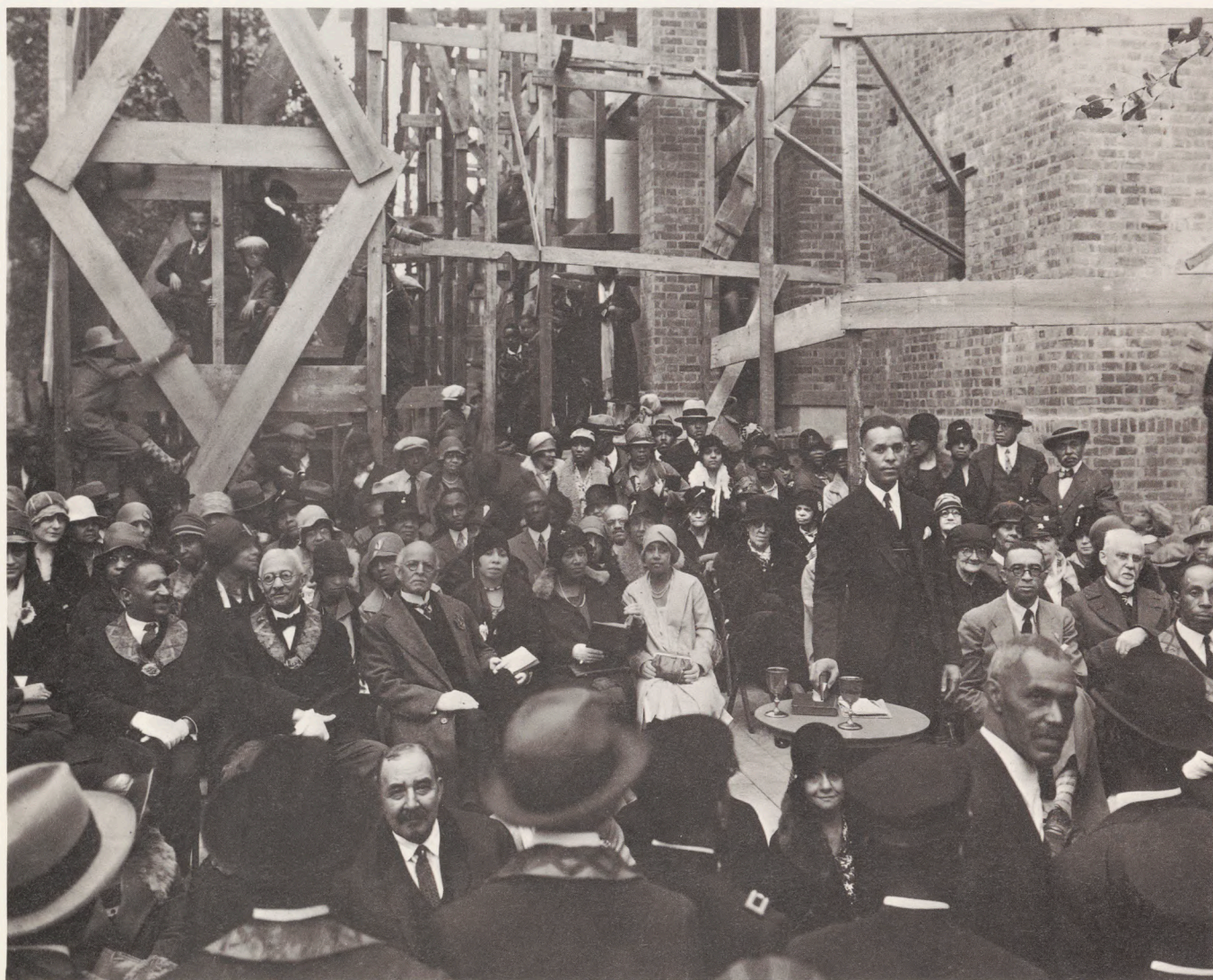
97. *Stump and Stello, Vaudeville Personalities*



27. *Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, Pioneer Scholar*



25. *Paul Laurence Dunbar, Poet*



62. Cornerstone Ceremony, Lincoln Temple Church



73. NAACP Women's Service Group



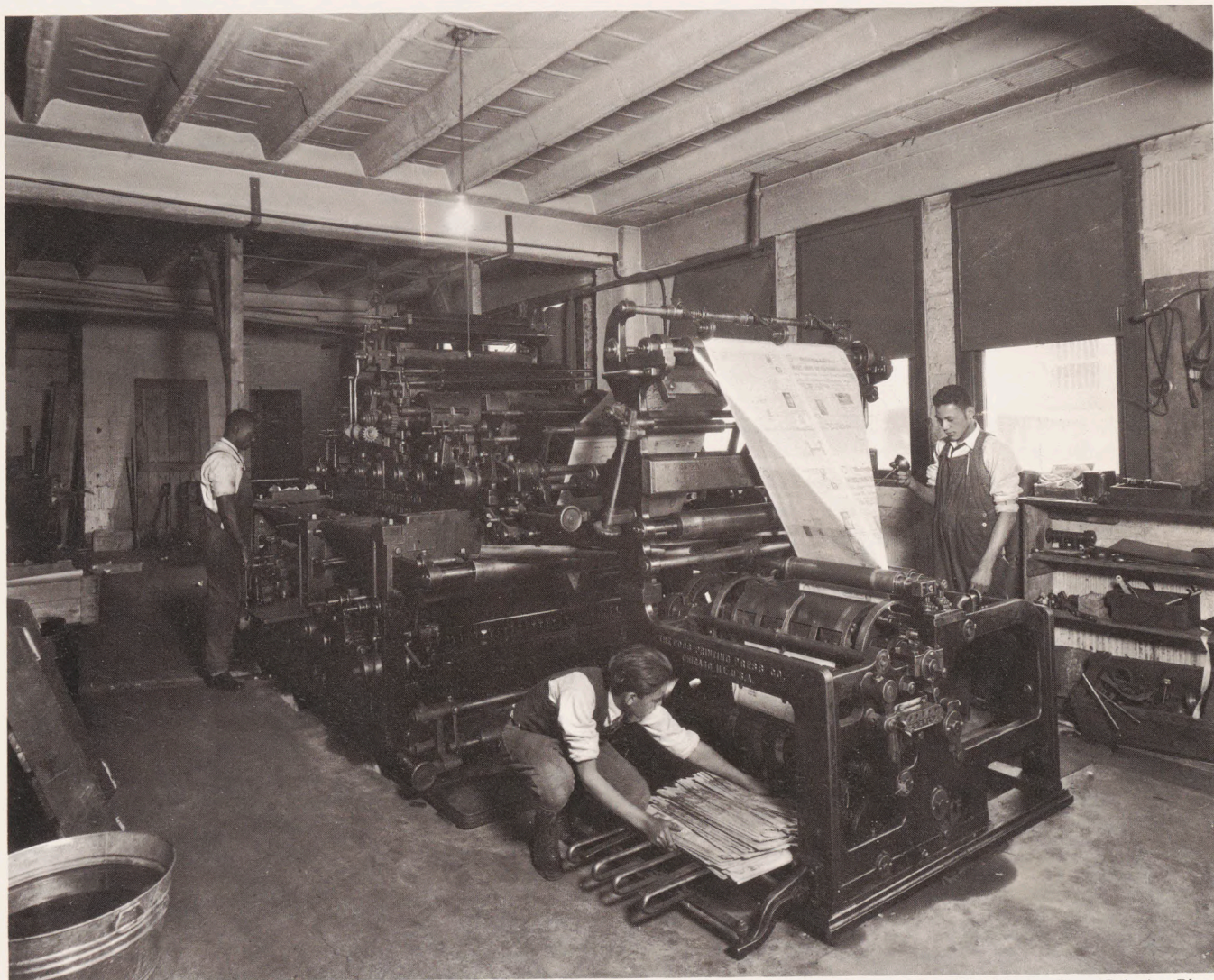
117. Formal Dance at Whitelaw Hotel



35. *Mme. Lillian Evanti, Concert Artist*



19. *Dusty Murray*, Vaudeville Personality



65. Murray Bros. Printing Plant

Catalogue of the Exhibition

All dimensions are in inches, height preceding width.

1. Dr. Archie Alexander, 1948, 14 x 10
2. The Rev. Walter H. Brooks, 1941, 11 x 14
3. Dr. Ralph J. Bunche, 1947, 14 x 11
4. Mr. and Mrs. John Burgess Twins, 1955, 11 x 14
5. Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, 1938, 11 x 14
6. Harry T. Burleigh, 1911, 10 x 8
7. Dr. Benjamin Brawley, 1931, 10 x 8
8. Dr. Sterling A. Brown, 1944, 14 x 11
9. Collie on the Beach, 1935, 10 x 8V
10. Countée Cullen 1930, 6 x 4V
11. Dr. Anna J. Cooper, 1934, 11 x 14
12. Howard University Chapel, 1930, 11 x 14
13. Dr. George Washington Carver at Howard University, c1934, 11 x 14
14. George W. Cook, 1927, 14 x 11
15. Melville Charlton, 1935, 14 x 11
16. Columbia Lodge Public Appearance Group, 1938, 11 x 14
17. Howard University Choir, 1955, 14 x 11V
18. President Calvin Coolidge, c.1926, 14 x 11V
19. Dusty Murray, Vaudeville Personality, 1926, 13¼ x 6½
20. Dr. Todd Duncan, 1945, 10 x 8V
21. Dunbar High School, 1922 Basketball Champions, 1922, 11 x 14
22. Dentist Baseball Team, c.1928, 8 x 10
23. Doctors Baseball Team, c.1928, 8 x 10
24. Dr. John W. Davis, 1944, 14 x 11
25. Paul Laurence Dunbar, c.1907, 9 x 7V
26. Gen. B.O. Davis, Jr., 1933, 14 x 11
27. Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, 1943, 14 x 11
28. Dr. Charles T. Duncan, 1937, 14 x 11
29. Congressman Oscar De Priest, 1929, 14 x 11
30. Father Divine, 1932, 14 x 11
31. Dr. Charles R. Drew, 1942, 20 x 16V
32. Edwards and DeLoach-Binghamton Brevities, 1927, 14 x 11
33. Lillian Evans Tibbs with her Son, 1925, (4)7 x 5
34. Dr. W. Bruce Evans, 1911, 14 x 11
35. Mme. Lillian Evanti, c.1920, 10 x 8
36. Dr. John Hope Franklin, 1956, 14 x 11
37. Tribute to a Founder (Gen. O.O. Howard), 1938, 14 x 11V
38. Prof. Richard T. Greener, 1909, 14 x 11
39. Grant's Rear Guard, c.1905, 14 x 11
40. G.A.R. Post, 1935, 11 x 14
41. The Rev. Francis J. Grimké, 1910, 14 x 11
42. Hiawatha Theater, 1922, 11 x 14
43. Dr. Roland Hayes, 1936, 14 x 11
44. Hustons "Sun to Sun Singers," 1938, 11 x 14
45. Dr. Charles H. Houston, 1931, 10 x 8
46. The Honorable William H. Hastie, 1945, 14 x 11
47. Julia West Hamilton, 1945, 14 x 11
48. Lena Horne, c.1942, 14 x 11V
49. President Herbert Hoover at Howard University, 1932, 11 x 14V
50. Herriott Drug Store, 1922, 10 x 14
51. Prof. Lois M. Jones, 1936, 12 x 11
52. Dr. Charles S. Johnson, 1930, 14 x 11
53. Dr. James Weldon Johnson, 1919, 14 x 11
54. Mrs. Louia Vaughn Jones, 1931, 14 x 11
55. Dr. Ernest E. Just, 1916, 14 x 11
56. Dr. Mordecai W. Johnson, 1940, 10 x 8V
57. Eugene Kinckle Jones, 1936, 14 x 11
58. Dr. Alain LeRoy Locke, 1919, 14 x 11
59. William H. Lewis, 1911, 14 x 11
60. Dr. Rayford W. Logan, 1941, 14 x 11
61. Maj. John R. Lynch, 1908, 14 x 11
62. Cornerstone Ceremony, Lincoln Temple Church, 1928, 11 x 14
63. Elder Solomon Lightfoot Michaux Baptism, 1940, 11 x 14
64. Aunt Mary, 1928, 14 x 11
65. Murray Bros. Printing Plant, 1927, 11 x 14
66. Effie Moore and Troupe, 1929, 11 x 14
67. Charlotte Wallace Murray, 1941, 14 x 11
68. Dr. Robert R. Moton, 1931, 14 x 11
69. Old Main Building, Howard University, 1931, 14 x 11
70. Prof. Kelly Miller, 1909, 11 x 8V
71. Congressman Arthur W. Mitchell, 1948, 14 x 11
72. Dr. Jesse E. Moorland, c.1920, 14 x 11
73. NAACP Women's Service Group, 1921, 11 x 14
74. Camille Nickerson, 1941, 14 x 11
75. Dr. James M. Nabrit Jr., 1960, 14 x 11
76. Our Gang Revue, 1926, 11 x 14

77. Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, 1944, 14 x 11
78. Picnic Group, Highland Beach, Md., c.1931, 11 x 14
79. Land Grant College Presidents with President Truman, 1931, 11 x 14
80. Self Portrait, Addison and Mamie Scurlock, 1911, 14 x 11
81. Prof. James A. Porter, 1933, 10 x 8
82. Portrait Study #1, c.1924, 12 x 8V
83. Portrait Study #2, c.1923, 10 3/4x9 1/2V
84. Portrait Study #3, c.1922, 9 x 6V
85. Portrait Study #4, c.1923, 12 3/4x9 1/2V
86. Portrait Study #5, c.1924, 7 3/4x11 1/4V
87. Portrait Study #6, c.1923, 12 1/2x9 1/4V
88. Portrait Study #7, c.1922, 11 x 8V
89. Portrait Study #8, c.1922, 10 3/4x6 3/4V
90. Portrait Study #9, c.1930, 10 1/2x10 1/2V
91. Portrait Study #10, c.1922, 9 1/2x12 3/4V
92. Portrait Study #11, c.1926, 12 1/2x9 1/2V
93. Portrait Study #12, c.1922, 7 1/2x12 3/4V
94. Dr. William J. Thompkins and President Roosevelt, c.1935, 10 x 8
95. Dr. Mordecai Johnson and Mrs. Roosevelt, 1938, 8 x 10
96. Scottsboro Mothers, c.1933, 11 x 14
97. Stump and Stello, 1925, 14 x 11
98. Judge Armond W. Scott, 1938, 10 x 8
99. C.C. Spaulding, 1946, 10 x 8

100. Dr. Emmett J. Scott, 1930, 14 x 11V
101. Dr. Channing H. Tobias, 1938, 14 x 11
102. Altar Boy (R.B. Thomas), 1938, 14 x 11
103. Judge Robert H. Terrell, c.1919, 14 x 11
104. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, c.1910, 6 x 4V
105. Robert Taylor and Partner, 1925, 10 x 8, (2) 5 x 7
106. Mary Church Terrell, c. 1940, 14 x 11
107. The Rt. Rev. W.T. Vernon, 1925, 11 x 8V
108. Waterfront, 1915, 11 x 14
109. Dr. Charles H. Wesley, 1925, 8 x 6V
110. Maggie L. Walker, 1925, 14 x 11
111. Dr. Chancellor Williams, 1944, 14 x 11
112. Dr. Carter G. Woodson, c.1920, 10 x 8
113. Long Walk, Howard University, 1930, 14 x 11
114. Dr. Robert C. Weaver, 1933, 14 x 11
115. Booker T. Washington, 1910, 14 x 11
116. Maj. James E. Walker, 1917, 14 x 11
117. Formal Dance at Whitelaw Hotel, c.1923, 20 x 16
118. Classic Dancers of the Mabel Jones Studio, 1931, 10 x 20
119. Tommy Myles Orchestra with Billy Eckstine Directing, 1933, 10 x 20
120. Church of God Mass Baptism on the Potomac, 1933, 10 x 20
121. Nathaniel Dett, Choral Society, 1935, 8 3/4 x 18 1/2

V-Vintage Prints



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